

The Return

by TheUnholyCzar

Category: Halo
Genre: Drama, Sci-Fi
Language: English
Status: Completed
Published: 2011-09-30 06:12:36
Updated: 2011-09-30 06:12:36
Packaged: 2016-04-27 00:29:17
Rating: T
Chapters: 1
Words: 2,577
Publisher: www.fanfiction.net
Summary: Oneshot. An Ultra returns home from the War and sets on a short journey to find someone.

The Return

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**Kourta District**

**City of Juz'n**

**State of Thokanzo**

**Sangheili**

**Thursday, July 15, 2553 (UNSC Calendar)**

**13:21 hours**

A Sangheili's hand hovered closely to his left thigh as he walked down the dirty and crowded streets. A small part of him was glad that his ceremonial Ultra armor hid the nervous look on his face. _"I have years of military training and experience," _he thought with a quiet sigh. _"And yet...none of that can prepare me for the dangers of this horrid place...Get it together, Nazo." _He shook his head and eased his grip from the sword's hilt, seeing a poor couple eyeing him strangely as they approached.

"Is there something wrong, your Excellency?" someone called. Nazo turned and smiled, recognizing the owner of the voice; a local security officer.

"No, Rtel," he said happily.

The officer frowned curiously. "Now, where have I heard that voice before?" he said, scratching at a mandible. "Nazo? Is that really

you?"

"Yes it is, old friend. How have these past twenty years treated you?"

"They have treated me well enough. As for this city...just take a look around."

"I noticed. Well, I may have one problem. Perhaps you could help me?"

"Of course. What do you need?"

"I seem to have forgotten the way to Lorai's home," he said, idly looking up and down the street.

"Lorai...Lorai," Rtel muttered, trying to place the name. "Lorai 'Drakos? I knew there was something going on between you two."

The two chuckled for a moment. "There was, Rtel. I have not so much as spoken to her since I left for service, and I plan to change that today."

"Of course, of course. This way, friend."

"It seems Sangheilios was left alone by our old allies..."

"Oh, it wasn't," Rtel said over his shoulder as Nazo followed, the latter finally noticing the officer's limp. "The Jiralhanae did in fact attack, but the fury of an entire race drove them away quickly."

"How many people fought?"

"Hmm. If I remember correctly, eighty percent. At least."

"And the casualties?"

"Less than three million."

"Could you be more specific?"

Rtel sighed. "Between 2.5 and 2.7 million, only twenty percent of that number being civilians."

"That is still far too high," Nazo said bitterly.

"Indeed, but our people as a whole are stronger now. The Council is going to great lengths to root out spies, be rid of the corrupt, and setting up relief efforts for places such as this."

"Spies?"

"Aye. There are those who are still loyal to the Covenant, and they are paid handsomely for what little information they can give. The thing about that is," Rtel paused to chuckle. "Most of the so-called 'spies' are just greedy Minors or a poor male who is down on his luck."

"So, most of the information the Covenant thinks they are

getting..."

"Is actually nothing, yes. But, there are true spies out there, and a few of them are very clever. Ah! Here we are." They stopped before a path made up of a brilliant golden-rust sand. "I must get back to the precinct, Nazo. A rowdy teenager was caught trying to break into an apartment. Gods, bless this city."

"Hmph, indeed. Until next time, friend." Rtel nodded before briskly walking back the way they had come. Nazo sighed and hesitantly began walking up the path, keeping his eyes on the small home. He soon found himself knocking on the door, the noise surprising him out of his trance. He stood straight as the door opened, revealing a female with immaculate tan skin and soft amber eyes. "Lorai 'Drakos?" he demanded.

The woman had a look of disbelief on her face as she nodded. "Um, what do you need, your Excellency?"

"May I come in? I need to have a word with you."

"Of course. I apologize for the mess, my son is home this week. Please, have a seat." Nazo sat in a chair that was all-too-familiar to him; it was here he had sat to discuss the terms of their relationship with Lorai's mother. "If you do not mind me asking, your Excellency...what is your name?"

"Come now, Lorai. Do you not recognize my voice?" he said in a softer tone than he had at the door, smiling as her eyes widened. "Yes, my love, it is I," he finished, removing the large helmet from his head.

"Nazo? But, you're dead," she breathed.

"Am I?"

"Well, that's what the local authorities told me. I'll fetch the report." He furrowed his brows in confusion as she exited the room.

"Dead? Why would someone say I was dead?"

"Here it is," she said, holding out the file folder.

"Rtel filed this?" he said upon reading its contents and examining the photos of a body that looked, much to his surprise, just like him.

"He delivered the copy personally an hour before our ceremony. Nazo, why...why didn't you tell me?"

"I never got the chance, Lorai. My superior found me in the market that day and hauled me off to service. I wrote this letter," he said, pulling out the envelope. "It is an apology. I never sent it...out of fear that you would reject it...reject me."

She leaned forward and placed a hand on one of his. "Nazo, you know I wouldn't do that. Even after Rtel brought me this report, I had hopes that you would return...that it was a lie."

He smiled. "Well, here I am. Would you-"

"Mother, who are you talking to?" a familiar voice said groggily.

Nazo shushed her quietly as she was about to speak. "Minor 'Drakos, are you _just now _waking up?" he called.

Ar'n suddenly rushed into the room with a club in hand. "What the hell are you doing here?" he growled.

"Ar'n," Lorai said sternly. "Sit down."

He immediately relaxed. "Yes, ma'am," he said, taking his place next to her.

"He talks about you nonstop, Nazo," she said. "How much you anger him...and how alike you really are, which causes him to rant even more."

"Does he, now?"

"Have you told him?"

Nazo sighed. "I tried."

"Ar'n, I want you to listen to me very carefully. Do you understand?"

"Yes, ma'am," he said quietly.

"When I told you that your father was dead, I lied. And that was only because I was lied to myself. Whenever it was that Nazo told you that he was your father, he was telling the truth."

"I know he was," Ar'n said, still looking at the ground. "I guess...I guess I was just angry at the fact that I grew up without him, it made me not want to believe it." He looked Nazo in the face, a hint of regret on his own. "I'm sorry, sir...I mean, father."

"There is no need to apologize, boy. But, I will never forgive you for trying to kill me."

"What?" Lorai said, glaring at Ar'n.

The latter shied away. "He hadn't told me yet. That was over something else."

"But, it _was _related. If 'Izak hadn't been there, neither of us would be here, Lorai."

"Who's that?"

"That's Garek, mother."

"Oh," she snickered. "The shy, scrawny Major. Where has he been?"

"Busy," Nazo said. "I have offered him leave many times, but he keeps refusing them, going on the in-system patrols instead."

"Well, you know Garek," Ar'n said. "He puts the safety of everyone else before his own."

"That he does. I can only imagine how 'Hesum feels about that."

"Ugh, she doesn't leave me or Rotje alone about it. She says she understands, then rants about he's not there."

"Then, you rant about it to me," Lorai said. "And, yes Nazo, he just got out of bed. He always stays up late on his leaves."

"Is he having trouble sleeping?"

"No," Ar'n said. "I have been working on something over the past month. Do you know how an overcharged shot from a Type-25 Pistol causes an EMP when the shot impacts something?"

"Yes. Go on."

"Well, I have been trying to create a weapon, or tool, however you want to look at it, that creates the same effect without harming the user."

"Really?" Nazo said with his head tilted. "What progress have you made?"

"Very little," Ar'n sighed. "I have a prototype, but it's...stubborn."

"Ah, a reflection of the creators behavior," Nazo said with a smirk. "When you get it working, I would like to see it before you present it to the High Command."

"You would?" Nazo nodded. "Well, if you'll both excuse me, I'll get back to work."

"That boy is obsessed with technology," Lorai said, shaking her head.

"Oh, I know. I have seen enough of it being his superior officer." The two sat in silence, staring at each other as muffled curses came through the walls. "Where was I? Oh, yes," he began. "Would you like to-"

"Yes," she said, cutting him off. "I have waited twenty long years, Nazo. And in those twenty years, I never looked for someone else."

"Well, we need to start making arrangements. Oh, I'm going to have to speak with your mother again."

"No, you won't. We're both adults, Nazo. We don't need our parents permission this time around."

"Good," he chuckled. "Your mother was insufferable."

"I didn't say you never had to talk to her again," she said slyly. "Just not about this."

"Oh, Gods," he groaned indignantly. "Do you still have the dress?"

"Of course I do."

"Good, wear it this evening. We are going out, and I have something to show you."

"Okay," she smiled. "Oh, and what happened to your face?"

"Oh, that? Just a battle scar."

"You're missing an entire mandible, Nazo."

"I have three others," he said with a shrug. "Besides, it could have been worse. The human that did it almost cut open my throat. Again, if 'Izak had not been there..."

"You owe him a lot, don't you?"

"I suppose, but he does not want anything in return. He simply says that it is his job. I never quite understood what he meant."

"What he meant was that he would give his life to ensure that nobody else got left behind. Now, how many other Sangheili could say that and not be lying?"

"Not many. Well, I must go tell my Shipmaster that I need my leave extended."

"You didn't get a week?"

"No, just a few of surface time. I have been busy overseeing upgrades to the ship."

"Alright. I'll see you this evening."

"Oh, and I am taking this false report."

**Central Precinct**

**Thokanzo Security Department **

**15:12 hours**

"I need to speak with Officer 'Borud," Nazo called as he entered the main lobby.

"May I ask why, your Excellency?" a female at the front desk said calmly.

"It is about this report."

"The 'Bezatee Case," she muttered, reading the files cover. "What is your name?"

"Nazo 'Bezat."

"If this is about a family member, the case has been closed."

"It is about me," he said, leaning over the desk. "The report is false, and I need to speak with the officer that filed it."

"Of course, your Excellency. "Rtel," she said, keying the intercom on the desk. "Someone needs to speak with you, he says it's urgent."

"Send him in, Nila."

"Down the hall, second door on the right."

"Thank you." Upon entering the office, Nazo quietly locked the door. "Rtel, what is the meaning of this?" he said, tossing the file on the desk.

"Uh, I..."

"Tell the truth," Nazo said, removing the sword hilt from his thigh.

"And if I refuse?"

"Then you lose your head."

Rtel sighed. "When you left on the day of your ceremony, Lorai was distraught. Seeing an opportunity to get close that didn't have before, I made up this report."

"What was the male's name?"

"I don't know. My best guess is that he was homeless, because he found in the streets with no form of identification and his clothing was in tatters. Having no evidence to go on, the case was immediately closed."

"But not until you slapped my name on it," Nazo growled. "We have been friend's since childhood, Rtel. How could you do something like this?"

"In life, you find that the people that are closest to you will often drive a knife into your back."

"So, you risked your career for a female that was already taken...out of jealousy?"

"Yes," he admitted. "But, she ignored my advances. She didn't want to believe that you were dead."

"Because she knew I was not. You do know that I could kill you without consequence, correct?"

"Yes."

"But, I will not," he said, replacing the sword. "I will let the authorities handle you. Officer Nali."

"Yes, your Excellency?"

"Did you record all of that?" Nazo said, seeing the color drain from

Rtel's face.

"I did. A few officers are waiting outside to escort 'Borud."

"I am sorry, old friend."

"You are no friend of mine," Nazo said lowly. "And, yes, you are."

*19:00 hours*

"Rtel was a good officer, but you did the right thing, Nazo," Lorai said as they traveled down a highway. "So, where are we going?"

"You will see."

"Nazo, we've crossed two state lines. You know that I don't like surprises."

"You will like this one, you will see. Take a nap, we still have quite a drive."

"Okay. Since you're going to be your stubborn old self," she said lightly. He chuckled as she reclined the seat and closed her eyes.

_"Stubborn old self, indeed." _After another two hours of driving, Nazo stopped in front of an ornate fence. "Lorai," he said, gently shaking her. "We are here."

"Where's here?" she said, tiredly looking around.

"You will see," he repeated, helping her out of the vehicle and covering her eyes. "Start walking, I will guide you."

"This isn't funny, Nazo," she sighed as she began walking up the stone pathway.

"I am not trying to be funny, Lorai." When he was satisfied with their position, he removed his hand from her eyes and smiled down at her. "Now, behold," he said, gesturing behind her.

She gasped as she turned around and laid eyes on the large estate. "Nazo, I..."

"This estate has been in my family for generations," he said, slowly walking forward. "And, being the last living child of my generation, it now belongs to me." He took her hands into his, and spoke softly. "To us."

"I...I don't know what to say."

"You do not need to say anything." He was surprised when she embraced him and began weeping. "What is wrong?"

"Nothing. Thank you."

His smile grew as he returned the gesture. "You are very welcome, my darling. I know how much you have leave that wanted to leave that horrible city, and I could not give you this before."

"We need to get our things."

"Do not worry, I will send someone for them. Now come, I feel a chill in the air."

End
file.